

Beverly Adams

I Feel Blessed

SAMUEL CLEMENS

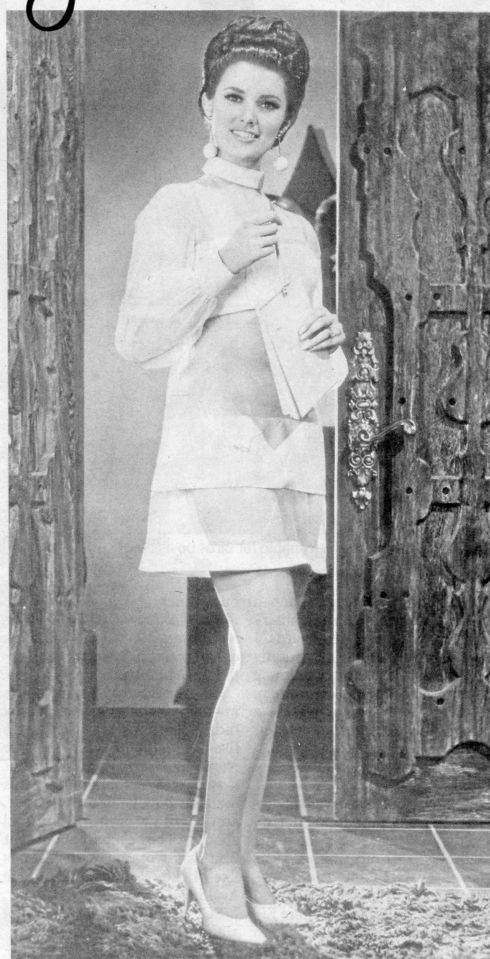
In addition to her iconic role as Lovey Kravetz in the Dean Martin-Matt Helm films *The Silencers* (1966), *Murderers' Row* (1966), and *The Ambushers* (1967), Beverly Adams had a prolific career as an actress, model, entrepreneur, and socialite. She was born in Alberta, Canada, but spent her childhood in Burbank, California. While studying at Valley State College, she began modeling and was crowned Miss Photogenic in December 1963. She appeared on television series like *Queen for a Day* and *Dr. Kildare* before signing a seven-year contract with Columbia Pictures. She had roles in *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini* (1965) and *Winter A-Go-Go* (1965), but is well-remembered for the role of D. Danger O'Riley on a 1965 *Bewitched* episode called "George the Warlock."

Beverly dated George Montgomery, Sandy Koufax, and Dan Busby before marrying Vidal Sassoon on February 16, 1967. They met while she was filming *Torture Garden* (1967) in England.

After she left Hollywood, she became a spokesperson for Vidal Sassoon Inc. She had four children, wrote several bestselling novels, and founded Beverly Sassoon Pet Care System. After she divorced Sassoon in 1981, she had a high-profile relationship with Erik Estrada, and they were presenters together at the 7th Annual People's Choice Awards in 1981. She was kind enough to do an interview with me, where we both reminisced about her onscreen career.

Samuel Clemens: How did you get into acting?

Beverly Adams: I had done modeling for months before I began acting. I did a gig modeling



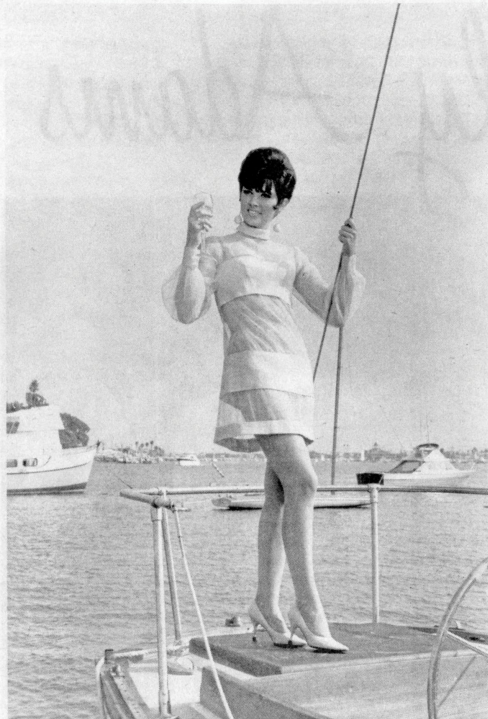
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Beverly Adams in a publicity photo for *Birds Do It* (1966).Beverly Adams in a publicity photo for *Birds Do It* (1966).

Beverly and her new husband, British-born hairstylist and businessman Vidal Sassoon, 1967.

In this publicity shot for *Birds Do It* (1966) star Soupy Sales gets a peck on the cheek from Beverly.Beverly played Lovey Kravet in three Matt Helm spy spoofs starring Dean Martin. This is the second, *Murderers' Row* (1966).

gowns, and an agent approached me and asked me to do a commercial for R.C. Cola. Afterwards, I secured an agent and began doing television roles before Columbia Pictures asked me to do a screen test for them. They gave me a seven-year contract, which felt like I was walking into a dream.

SC: How was Columbia Studios?

Beverly Adams: It was smaller than Warner Bros. and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, so a lot of us were close with one another. I was one of several budding contractees whom they had plans to mold into a star. Others there were Eileen O'Neill, Chris Noel, and even Harrison Ford in what was known as their "New Talent" program. We went our separate ways, but occasionally I see them at vari-

ous venues.

SC: *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini* is a cult classic. What did you think of the script? How was your experience filming it?

Beverly Adams: I had to dye my hair for that role. It certainly didn't have the status of films like *Gone with the Wind* (1939) or *North by Northwest* (1959), but it was a respectable film. It was certainly popular upon its release, and I still get a lot of fan mail about it. The best part about that film was working with legends like Mickey Rooney and Frankie Avalon.

SC: What was it like acting alongside Mickey Rooney?

Beverly Adams: He was hilarious, not to mention talented. I had an interesting experience with him because he would eat

raw onions with his food. I didn't like the odor, though, and I got the courage to tell him how awful it was. His response was "If Ava Gardner can tolerate it, so can you." He was funny, but he certainly had a lot of difficulties in his life.

SC: Is there a role that you rejected, or that you regretted not pursuing?

Beverly Adams: I was a contractee, so I accepted whatever roles I was offered. We didn't have a lot of options in those days. The studios made these decisions for you. There was a role that I was considered for in *Love Story* (1970) after a representative with the William Morris Agency contacted me. The role eventually went to Ali MacGraw, and it became a box-office success. If I



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Here, Beverly advises us to "Tan don't burn, get a Coppertone tan!"



Mickey Rooney and Beverly Adams in *How to Stuff a Wild Bikini* (1965).

had gotten that role, it certainly would've changed the trajectory of my life.

SC: Your role of Lovey Kravetz in *The Silencers*, *Murderers' Row*,

and *The Ambushers* is iconic among moviegoers. You did a lot of romantic scenes with Dean Martin. What was that like?

Beverly Adams: He was a lot



Beverly, here surrounded by Bernard Kay, John Phillips, and a scarred Robert Hutton, appeared in the British Amicus anthology *Torture Garden* (1967), in the segment "Terror Over Hollywood."

older than I was, so it was a bit awkward. We filmed a scene in a tub together that was sensualized. Nowadays, I look at him and think about how handsome he was. He couldn't have been kinder. He was a great actor and a good person. He wasn't a womanizer, either, despite his onscreen persona. We campaigned together during the gubernatorial election of Pat Brown a year later.

SC: A lot of actresses in Hollywood are coming forth about cases of sexual harassment. What's your opinion of the #MeToo movement?

Beverly Adams: When I was an actress in Hollywood, there was nowhere to report sexual harassment. I think it's great that women have places to get help and people to talk to. Unfortunately, I think that some of these women are a bit too sensitive. I think that some of these accusations of rape and sexual assault are false, too, which puts innocent people at risk. There needs to be balance. We've gone from one extreme to another. We should take women

seriously, but we should also understand that everyone is innocent until proven guilty.

SC: Was there anyone in Hollywood you were uncomfortable with?

Beverly Adams: I did a film called *Devil's Angels* (1967) starring John Cassavetes. I felt a bit nervous performing alongside him. He played a lot of rebellious roles throughout his career, and he was very serious and experienced as an actor. He had a lot of other talents, too, such as directing. Other than the fact that he hadn't ridden a motorcycle prior, he was a great fit for the role of Cody. He was kind towards me, though, and he appreciated how professional I was.

SC: Why did you leave Hollywood?

Beverly Adams: After I got married, I asked Columbia Pictures to cancel my contract. They eventually did as I started having children. I was heavily involved in my husband's businesses, and I delved into writing. I sort of just left [Hollywood]. I never intended

to be an actress growing up; it was something that I fell into. If I was more passionate about it, I probably would've continued it.

After I divorced Vidal, I began dating Erik Estrada and slowly returned to television. We broke our engagement, and I married a bullfighter named Antonio Mignon. After our marriage was annulled, I married Philip Neal, who was the love of my life. It was then that I stopped acting entirely.

SC: Do you ever think about returning to acting? Do you get any offers for roles?

Beverly Adams: I get offers to do commercials, but I have no intentions of returning to Hollywood. Something about acting that audiences should know is that it is a craft and you must practice it. I haven't done that, and I find it more enjoyable to watch films than to be performing in them. My last onscreen role was in 1999, and I can't say that I miss it. I have children, grandchildren, and friends who I devote a lot of my life to. I love my life the way it is, and I feel blessed.